REALISTIC STRATEGIES FOR BULLY PREVENTION & PROMOTING POSITIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE

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This research was supported by Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (#1U01/CE001677) to Dorothy Espelage (PI)

University of Illinois Anti-Bullying Program

- **Indiana University Teen Conflict Survey** (Bosworth, Espelage, & Simon, 1999; Espelage et al., 2000, 2001)
- **University of Illinois Bullying Research Program**
  - INTERVIEW STUDY (Espelage & Asidao, 2001)
  - EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE STUDY (Espelage, 1998)
  - SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS STUDY (Espelage, Holt, & Henkel, 2003; Espelage, Green, & Wasserman, 2007; Espelage, Green, & Polanin, in press)
  - SEXUAL HARASSMENT, DATING VIOLENCE, & BULLYING STUDIES (Holt & Espelage, 2003; Holt & Espelage, 2005; Espelage & Holt, 2006)
  - ATTRIBUTION, COPING STYLES, & BULLYING (Kingsbury & Espelage, 2006)
  - THEORY OF MIND, EMPATHY, & BULLYING (Espelage et al., 2004; Mayberry & Espelage, 2006)
  - HOMOPHOBIA, SEXUAL VIOLENCE, & BULLYING (Poteat & Espelage, 2006; Espelage et al., 2008)
  - Sexual Orientation, Bullying, & Mental Health Outcomes (Espelage, Aragon, Birkett, & Koenig, 2008; Poteat, Espelage, & Koenig, 2009; Birkett, Espelage, & Koenig, 2009)
- **CDC Federally-funded Grants:**
  - Bullying & SV Overlap (2007 - 2010)
  - Randomized Clinical Trial of Middle School Second Step Program (Committee for Children, 2008) in Reducing Bullying & SV (2009-2013)

With Awareness Comes Misperception

Misperception	Scientific Evidence
Bullying is an epidemic.	Bully Rates Have Not Changed
Bully-suicide linked.	Bully Only One of Many Predictors
Bully are young criminals.	Bullies are diverse in their outcomes
Bullies need to be punished.	Ignores Group Phenomena
Bullies – dysfunctional families	Good kids get involved in bullying

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is unwanted aggressive behavior(s) among school-age children that has a high likelihood of causing physical or psychological harm or injury and is characterized by:

1) an imbalance of real or perceived power that favors the aggressor(s);

2) is repeated or has a high likelihood of being repeated;

3)The victim(s) of bullying may feel intimidated, demeaned, or humiliated as a result of the aggression.

Bullying Prevalence

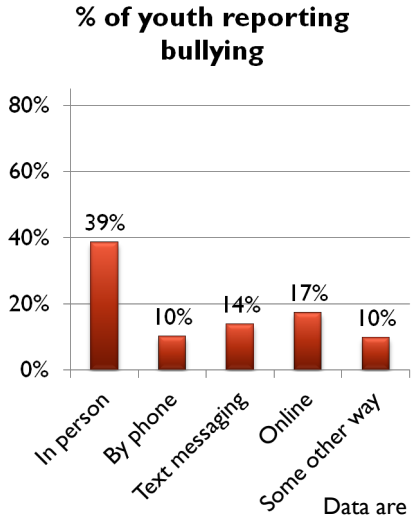
- Among 3rd – 8th graders:
  - 15% Chronically Victimized
  - 17% Ringleader Bullies
  - 8% Bully-Victims
  - 60% Bystanders

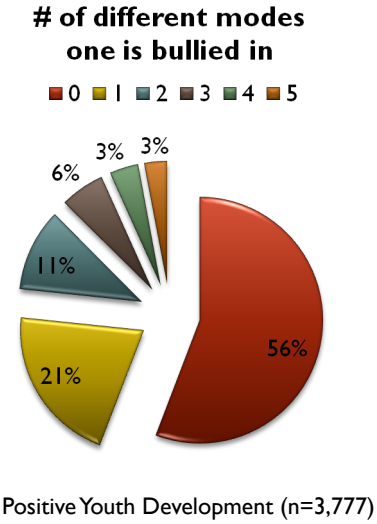
Cyber-Bullying

"Cyber-bullying involves the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behavior by an individual or group, that is intended to harm others."

(Bill Belsey: www.cyberbullying.ca)

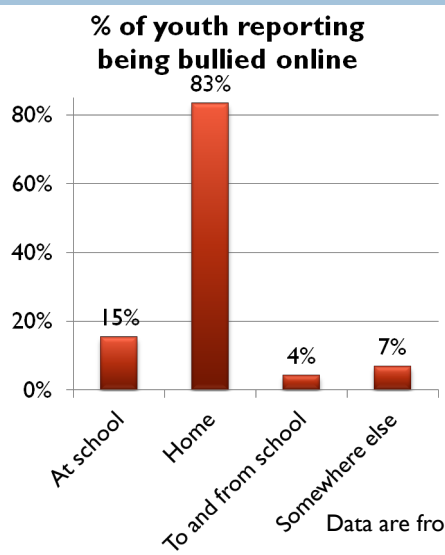
Cyberbullying is inescapable (?)

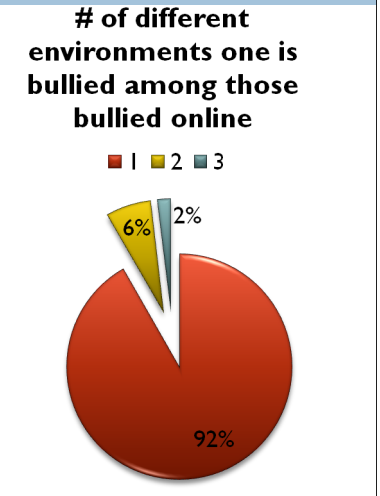




Data are from Positive Youth Development (n=3,777)

Cyberbullying is inescapable (?)





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CyberBullying (Ybarra, 2011)

Cyberbullying (bullying online) affects between 15-17% of youth each year; harassment affects about 38%	• More than 80% youth who use the Internet are ***not*** **cyberbullied**
About 1/3 of bullied and harassed youth are very or extremely upset	• 75% who are bullied and harassed youth were not upset
Bullying is most commonly an **in-person** experience (21% are bullied exclusively this way).	• For a concerning minority (8%), bullying is ubiquitous (in person, online, via text)
Internet victimization is **not increasing**	• Text messaging victimization may be increasing…

Bullying Prevention – Meta-analysis (Merrell et al., 2008)

- Evaluated effectiveness of 16 bullying efficacy studies across some six countries (six studies in US).
- Only two of six US studies published.
- All showed small to negligible effects.
- Small positive effects found for enhancing social competence and peer acceptance, and increasing teacher knowledge and efficacy in implementing interventions.
- Reality—No impact on bullying behaviors.
- *Farrington & Tfoti (2009) – programs that are effective in European country include parents, use of multimedia, and target teacher's competence in responding to bullying.*

Bullying Prevention – Pushing The Field Forward

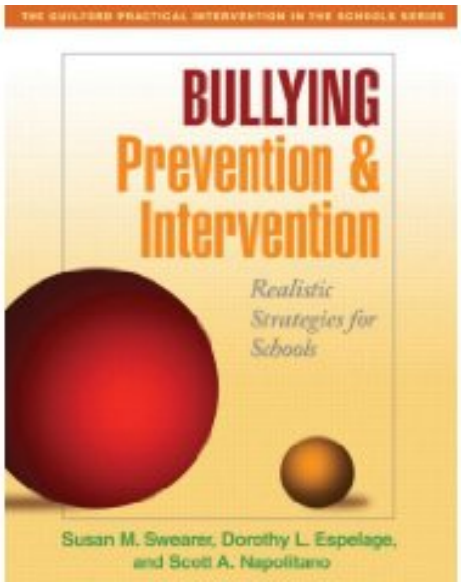
- Need to recognize that bullying co-occurs with other types of aggression and other risky behavior (delinquency, AOD).
- Overlapping risk and protective factors need to be targeted in school-based programs in order to address spectrum of problem behavior (Cataliano et al., 2002).
- Need to consider interventions that address these risk and protective factors.
- Programs should address the peer or social norms in schools.

Bullying Prevention – Pushing the Field Forward

- Need to address the extent to which demographic variables (such as gender and race) impact efficacy.
  - FOR EXAMPLE, IN ONE STUDY OF THE OBPProgram; reductions in victimization were found only for white students, not for the large sample of Asian or Black students (Bauer, Lozano, & Rivara, 2007)
- Need to consider how classroom management skills and implementation levels impact a program's effectiveness.
- Need to seriously consider how to motivate schools to engage in a serious conversation about bully prevention.
- REALITY– Research evidence MUST inform the next generation of prevention efforts; by contributing to modifications, enhancements, implementation issues, and must infuse INNOVATION into basic and applied scholarship.

Considering Bias-based Language

- Large percentage of bullying among students involves the use of homophobic teasing and slurs, called homophobic teasing or victimization (Poteat & Espelage, 2005; Poteat & Rivers, 2010).
- Bullying and homophobic victimization occur more frequently among LGBT youth in American schools than among students who identify as heterosexual (Birkett, Espelage, & Koenig, 2009; Kosciw, Greytak, & Diaz, 2009).
- LGBT youth report indicated 84.6% of LGBT students reported being verbally harassed, 40.1% reported being physically assaulted at school in the past year because of their sexual orientation (Kosciw, Greytak, Diaz, & Bartkiewicz, 2010).



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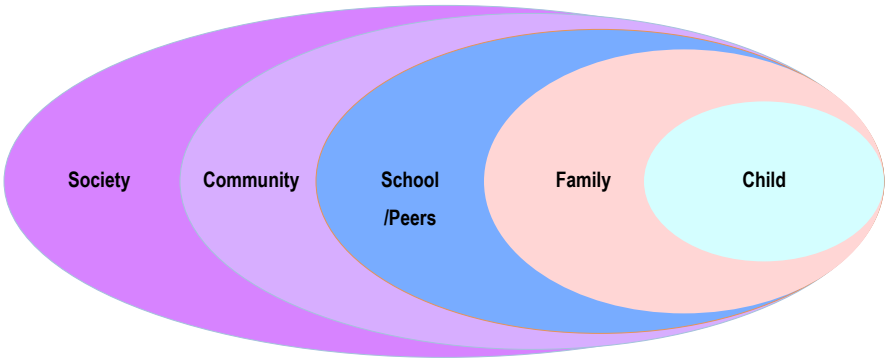
Social-Ecological Perspective



(Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Swearer & Doll, 2001; Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Espelage & Horne, 2007)

Meta-Analytic Study

- Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim, & Sadek (2010)
  - Reviewed 153 studies since 1970
  - Youth who bully other students: have significant externalizing behavior, social competence and academic challenges, negative attitudes toward others, family characterized by conflict
  - Peer Status & Bully varied by age: Adolescents who bully have higher peer status than children who bully others

Bullying & Adult Outcomes

- Special Issue in *Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health*.
- Studies examined longitudinal associations between bullying/aggression during childhood/adolescence and then associations with adult outcomes (substance use, offending, job status)
- Studies controlled for a number of risky individual (hyperactivity) and contextual (family) variables
- Association between bullying and later adult outcomes reduced when these variables were considered
- Conclusion: Bullying **MIGHT** increase the likelihood of these later outcomes.

Individual Correlates of Bullying Involvement

- Depression/Anxiety
- Empathy
- Delinquency
- Impulsivity
- Other forms of Aggression
- Alcohol/Drug Use
- Positive Attitudes toward Violence/Bullying
- Low Value for Prosocial Behaviors
  - For review (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Espelage & Horne, 2007)

Family & School Risk Factors

- **FAMILY**
  - Lack of supervision
  - Lack of attachment
  - Negative, critical relationships
  - Lack of discipline/ consequences
  - Support for violence
  - Modeling of violence
- **SCHOOL**
  - Lack of supervision
  - Lack of attachment
  - Negative, critical relationships
  - Lack of discipline/ consequences
  - Support for violence
  - Modeling of violence

For review (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Espelage & Horne, 2007)

Sibling Bullying

- Sibling bullying is tied to school-based bullying in many countries (Espelage & Swearer, 2003 for review)
- Study of 1,000 middle school students, sibling aggression/family conflict predicted greater bully perpetration (Espelage et al., under review)

Relation Between Bullying & Other Victimization Forms

- Child maltreatment has been associated with difficulties in peer relations (Jacobsen & Straker, 1992; Shields & Cicchetti, 2001)
- Exposure to domestic violence has been linked to bullying perpetration (Baldry, 2003)
- Study of 779 middle school students, association between bullying perpetration and family violence victimization was moderately associated for females (r = .31) and bullying perpetration was also related to neighborhood violence victimization (r = .40; Espelage & Stein, in prep)

BULLYING PERPETRATION & SUBSEQUENT SEXUAL VIOLENCE PERPETRATION AMONG MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

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This research was supported by Centers for Disease Control & Prevention

Bully-Sexual Violence Pathway

- Emerging theory – bullying perpetration & homophobic teasing are thought to be predictive of sexual violence over time.
- Bullying is associated with increasing homophobic teasing perpetration during early adolescence.
- When students engage in homophobic teasing, sexual perpetration may develop as students are developing opposite-sex attractions and sexual harassment becomes more prevalent.

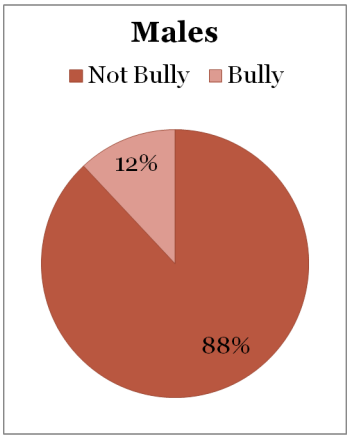
Definitions

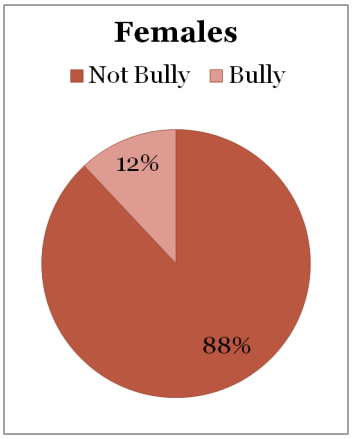
- **Bullying:** An act of intentionally inflicting injury or discomfort upon another person (through physical contact, through words or in other ways) repeatedly and over time for the purpose of intimidation and/or control.
- **Homophobic Teasing:** Negative attitudes and behaviors directed toward individuals who identify as or are ***perceived*** to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered.
- **Sexual Harassment:** Includes comments, sexual rumor spreading, or groping.

Participants of Current Study

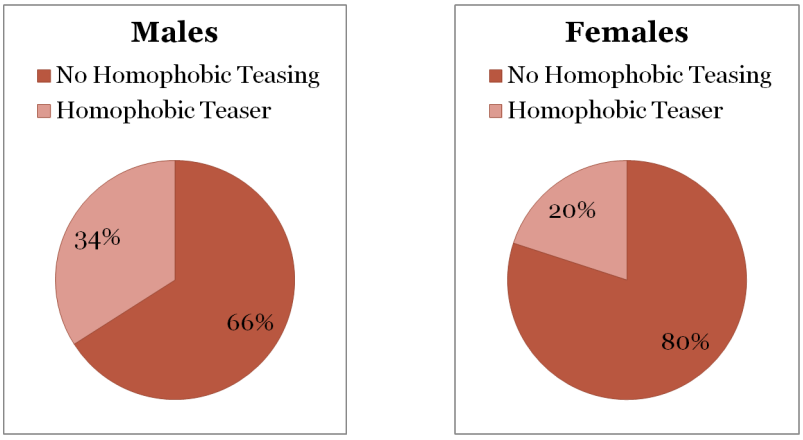
- 1,391 middle school students
- 5 middle schools (grades 5 – 8)
- 49.8% Females
- 59% African-American, 41% Caucasian
- 67% Low-Income

Percentages of Youth Who Bully

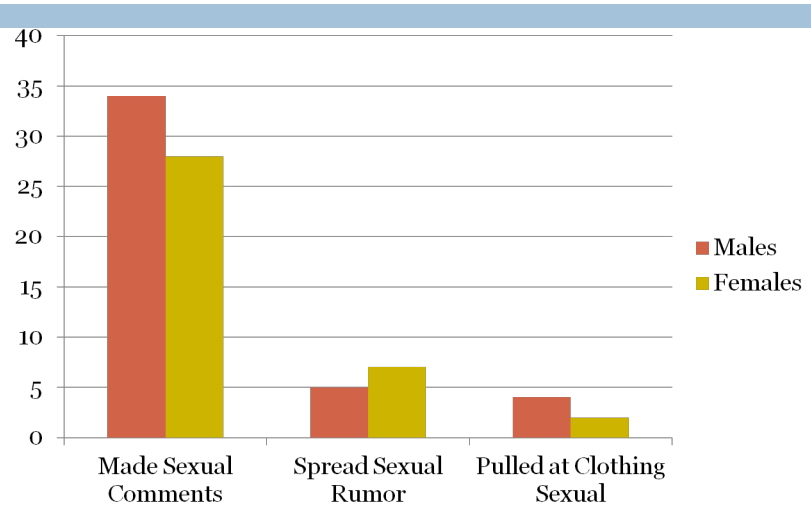




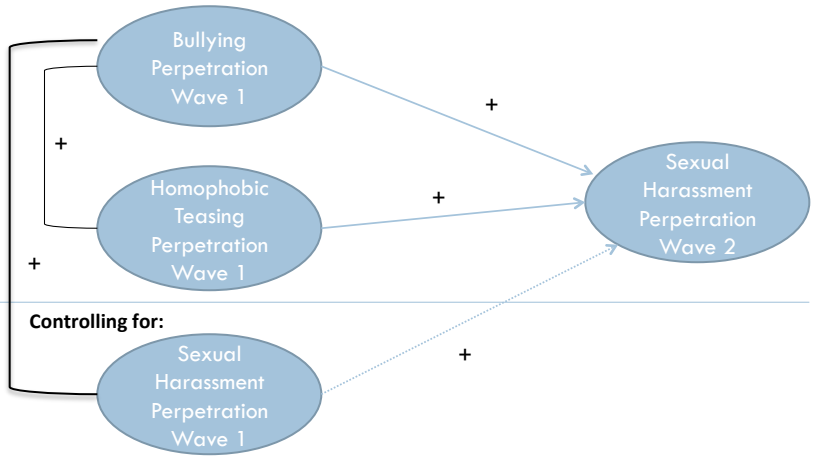
Percentages of Youth Who Homophobic Name-Call



Percentages of Sexual Harassment Perpetration



Longitudinal Results



CAUSAL LINK: Bullying – Homophobic Teasing

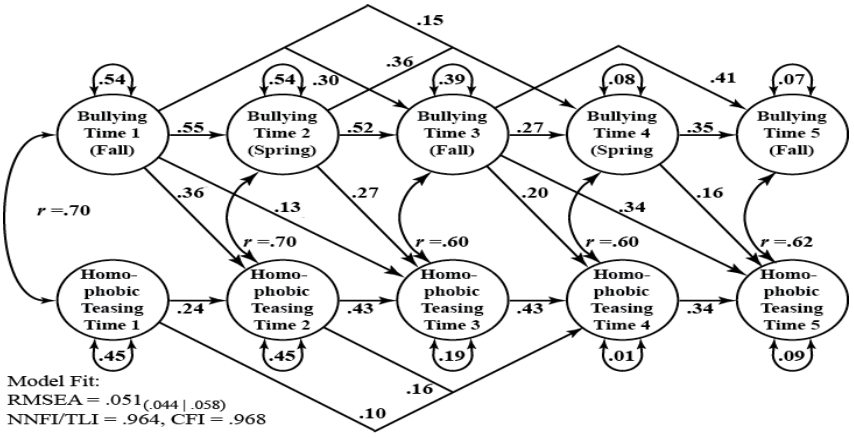


Figure 1. *Standardized parameter estimates from the panel model of the relations among bullying and homophobic teasing.*

Research Findings

- Bullying perpetration causally linked to homophobic teasing perpetration.
- Relation between bullying perpetration and sexual harassment perpetration explained by homophobic teasing perpetration.
- Association between bullying perpetration and homophobic perpetration explained by higher levels of traditional masculinity.
- Bullying perpetration, homophobic bullying perpetration, and sexual harassment perpetration develops from peer influence, modeling, and socialization.

Suggestions

Addressing homophobic teasing explicitly within a bullying prevention curriculum may be a way to delay development of sexual harassment. At a minimum, homophobic teasing should be addressed by adults:

That's so gay	•What does that mean? •You think it means 'stupid,' but it actually refers to a person's sexual orientation. •You might be surprised to know that what you said may hurt someone's feelings. •How can something have a sexual orientation?
You throw like a girl	•Are you saying that I am a girl? •Are implying that girl's can't throw? •People do have different abilities, but that does not mean you need to be so mean.
You're such a fag/dyke	•That type of language is not acceptable. •We don't use those words here.

Why little success in preventing school bullying?

- Most frequently used bullying prevention programs DO NOT incorporate content related to use of homophobic language & bullying directed at LGBT youth.
  - 23 bullying prevention programs in US, only three mentioned LGBT bullying; and NONE did this indepth (Birkett & Espelage, 2010)
  - These include Flirting or Hurting (Stein & Sjorstom, 1996), Step Up (Madsen et al., 2006), Second Step (CfC, 2008)
- Meta-analyses do not include evaluation of Groundspark videos: Let's Get Real (2003), Straightlaced (2009).
- SOLUTION: Bully State Laws should require bully prevention plan to include LGBT related material (GSA, lessons, academic content)

WILLINGNESS TO INTERVENE IN BULLYING EPISODES AMONG MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS: INDIVIDUAL AND PEER-GROUP INFLUENCES

JOURNAL OF EARLY ADOLESCENCE

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This research was supported by Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (#1U01/CE001677) to Dorothy Espelage (PI)

Results & Conclusions

- In this study (at least for boys) efforts to influence an individual's willingness to intervene will be more successful with careful consideration of the bullying perpetration level among friendship groups.
- Findings suggest importance to explore predictors of attitudes and behaviors across multiple levels, including individual and peer groups.
- Lack of attention to peer group influences on bullying attitudes and behaviors is an unfortunate phenomenon because bystander intervention is emphasized within some of the most commonly utilized bullying prevention programs (Newman et al., 2000; Olweus, 1993).
- These findings provide support for the practice in many of these programs to teach students perspective-taking skills.

Bystander Interventions (Polanin, Espelage, & Pigott, 2011)

- Meta-analysis synthesized the effectiveness of bullying prevention programs in altering bystander behavior to intervene in bullying situations.
- Evidence from twelve school-based interventions, involving 12,874 students, revealed that overall the programs were successful (ES = .21, C.I.: .12, .30), with larger effects for high school samples compared to K-8 student samples (HS ES = .44, K-8 ES = .13; p = .001).
- Analysis of empathy for the victim revealed treatment effectiveness that was positive but not significantly different from zero (ES = .05, CI: -.07, .17).
- Nevertheless, this meta-analysis indicated that programs were effective at changing bystander behavior both on a practical and statistically significant level.

Social-Emotional Learning

- **Goal 1: Develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success.**
  - **Identify and manage one's emotions and behavior.**
  - **Recognize personal qualities and external supports.**
  - **Demonstrate skills related to achieving personal and academic goals.**

Social-Emotional Learning

- **Goal 2: Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships.**
  - **Recognize the feelings and perspectives of others.**
  - **Recognize individual and group similarities and differences.**
  - **Use communication and social skills to interact effectively with others.**
  - **Demonstrate an ability to prevent, manage, and resolve interpersonal conflicts in constructive ways.**

Social-Emotional Learning

- **Goal 3: Demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts.**
  - **Consider ethical, safety, and societal factors in making decisions.**
  - **Apply decision-making skills to deal responsibly with daily academic and social situations.**
  - **Contribute to the well-being of one's school and community.**

SEL Framework

- **Research Foundations**
  - Risk and Protective Factors
  - Bullying
  - Brain Research
  - Positive Approaches to Problem Behavior
  - Developmental Needs of Young Adolescents
    - (Espelage & Low, 2012)

IMPACT OF A SCHOOL-RANDOMIZED TRIAL OF *STEPS TO RESPECT: A BULLYING PREVENTION PROGRAM®*

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Funded by: Raynier Foundation

Study Design

- **School-randomized controlled trial**
  - Elementary schools matched on key demographic variables (size, %FRPL, mobility rates)
  - Randomized to intervention or wait-listed control
  - Selected four 3rd-5th grade classrooms to collect data
  - One-year, pre-post data collection from school staff, teachers, and students
- **Participants**
  - 33 elementary schools
    - in 4 counties in northern, central California
    - 25% rural, 10% small towns, 50% suburban, 15% mid-sized cities
    - Average *N* of students = 479 (range = 77 to 749)
    - Average *N* of teachers = 24
    - Average 40% of students receiving FRL

Study Design

- **Participants**
  - School Staff
    - ❖ *N*s = 1,307 (pretest) and 1,296 (postest)

  -Teachers
    - ❖ *N*= 128
  - Students
  - ❖ *N* = 2,940 Students
    - ❖ 94% of target population
    - ❖ 51% Male
    - ❖ 52% White
    - ❖ 42% Hispanic
    - ❖ 6% Asian
    - ❖ 35% Other race/ethnicity
    - ❖ Age range = 7 to 11 years

Results

- **Teacher Report**
  - **Social Competency (+)**
  - Academic Competency
  - Academic Achievement
  - **Physical Bullying Perpetration (-)**
  - Non-Physical Bullying Perpetration

  ❖ *d* = .131 for Social Competency
  ❖ AOR = .609 for Physical Bullying Perpetration

Note: Bolded outcomes indicate significant ($p < .05$) intervention effects.

Results

Student Report

- Student Support
- Student Attitudes Against Bullying
- Student Attitudes Toward Bullying Intervention
- **Teacher/Staff Bullying Prevention (+)**
- **Student Bullying Intervention (+)**
- **Teacher/Staff Bullying Intervention (+)**
- **Positive Bystander Behavior (+)**
- School Bullying-Related Behaviors
- Bullying Perpetration
- Bullying Victimization
- **Student Climate (+)**
- School Connectedness
- Staff Climate

Note: Bolded outcomes indicate significant ($p < .05$) intervention effects.

CLINICAL TRIAL OF SECOND STEP© STUDENT SUCCESS THROUGH PREVENTION PROGRAM: IMPACT ON AGGRESSION, VICTIMIZATION, AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE AMONG MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Research supported by Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (#1U01/CE001677)

Levels and Lessons

- 50 minutes to teach a complete lesson
- Each lesson is divided into two parts that can be taught separately

Five Program Themes

- Each level includes the following five themes:
  - Empathy and communication
  - Bullying prevention
  - Emotion management
    - Coping with stress (grades 7 and 8)
  - Problem-solving
    - Decision-making (grade 7)
    - Goal-setting (grade 8)
  - Substance abuse prevention

Year 1: Pre-Post Results

•The HGLM analysis indicated that students from the Second Step intervention schools had a significantly decreased probability of self-report fighting (γ_{01} = -.36, p < .05, O.R. = .70) in comparison to students in the control schools.

•The adjusted odds ratio indicated that the treatment effect was substantial; **individuals in intervention schools were 42% less likely to self-report fighting other students.** No intervention effects were found for the other outcome variables.

Implications for Prevention Programming

- Need to give kids life and social skills, not just knowledge about bullying
- Need to develop secondary and tertiary programs, not just primary prevention programs
- Bullying programs need to consider incorporating discussion of sexual harassment and (homophobic language; Birkett & Espelage, 2010).
  - 67 bullying prevention programs in US, only five discuss sexual harassment or sexual orientation issues.
- Peers influence has to be considered in developing and evaluating prevention/intervention programs
  - 67 bullying prevention programs, only one attempts to target and shift peer norms.

Implications for Prevention Programming

- Recognize that students are witnessing and involved in violence in their homes. We need to give them alternatives to violence for solving problems and conflicts.
- Consider how the use of technology is influencing relationships and talk to kids about responsible use of technology.

Realistic Strategies

- Simple strategies can help to decrease bullying
  - Use data to make decisions (i.e., Increase hallway monitors; reduce time between classes)
  - Involve PE teachers and coaches in stopping bullying behaviors
- With your support, students can play an important role in decreasing bullying
  - Implement a procedure to allow students to confidentially repot bullying incidents
    - Take all bullying reports seriously!
    - Create a confidential reporting system
  - Have an open door policy with counselors to address the needs of students involved in bullying

Realistic Strategies

- Make sure your school has an anti-bullying policy that is consistent with state and federal policies
- Make sure the adult workplace models healthy social relationships
- Work respectfully and collaboratively with families
- Use videos and classroom discussion guides to talk about the detrimental effects of bullying
- Use social-emotional learning activities to create a positive school climate
- Use a positive behavioral interventions and supports to respond effectively to student behaviors